



September 13, 2023

Hon. Stephen Murray
Mayor, City of Beaufort
1911 Boundary Street
Beaufort, SC 29902

RE: Development Code Changes to Address “Missing Middle” Housing

Dear Mayor Murray,

Surveys and conversations consistently reveal two dominant concerns for members of the Beaufort Regional Chamber of Commerce: workforce availability and housing affordability. The issues are linked. We cannot hope to address our workforce challenges without also addressing housing. Likewise, we cannot meaningfully improve housing affordability without increasing supply of “missing middle” housing types.

We applaud the City of Beaufort for recognizing housing concerns in its Comprehensive Plan, and for undertaking a process to review and revamp the City’s development code and processes. There is no single “silver bullet” solution to address housing, but changes to local public policy and to the approvals processes can allow the private sector to deliver more housing units. To make progress on the region’s affordable housing challenge, please consider the following:

- **Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs)** – smaller footprint stand-alone housing units on existing lots can allow local residents to age in place near family or for young professionals to afford housing. Many detached carriage houses in historic neighborhoods have already been converted for this purpose. With clear standards for design, ADUs should be allowed by right in all residential zones.
- **Small Scale Multifamily** – many established neighborhoods like Pigeon Point, where I live, enjoy generous lot sizes and close proximity to parks, retail and other amenities. Neighborhoods like this are ideal for small scale multifamily redevelopment including duplexes, triplexes, quadplexes and attached townhouses. With clear standards for design, small scale multifamily housing should be allowed by right in all residential zones.
- **Expedited Review and Permitting** – ADUs and small scale multifamily are not novel in our community, but they are uncommon. Property owners and developers are unlikely to take the financial risks associated with building them if they are unsure that the project approval process will be swift. Establish clear and rigorous guidelines and empower City staff to issue permits without board approval or public hearings. If we are serious about “missing middle” housing, we should allow it to be built with the same efficiency we allow single family housing.
- **No New Barriers** – easing our region’s housing affordability challenge will require more housing supply of all types. Do not implement any new requirements that might impede housing in the interest of promoting other laudable goals like increasing mixed use. Instead, look for real value incentives, like reduced parking requirements or fee abatements, to incentivize more mixed use.

- **Explore Existing Barriers** – as the city continues the development code review process, please look for other policy areas for changes that may reduce cost and add efficiency to the development process for affordable housing. Elevation, parking, construction materials, and road frontage requirements may all present opportunities for meaningful discussion and refinement in the interest of generating more affordable housing units.

Thank you for your leadership to address our region's housing challenges and to promote the economic prosperity of this great community.

Sincerely,



Ian D. Scott
President & CEO

Cc: Curt Freese, Neil Lipsitz, Scott Marshall, Mike McFee, Mitch Mitchell, Josh Scallate